

JALIL ABDUL MUNTAQUIN'S BIOGRAPHY

I was born October 18, 1951, at 3:43 a.m. in Oakland, California, the first of four children in my family. My early years were spent in San Francisco. During my elementary school years, I received a summer scholarship for a high school chemistry course; and while in high school in San Jose, California, I received a summer scholarship for a San Jose State College engineering course. These academic achievements are attributed to my mother's ambitious determination to succeed in a white man's world, she having been the first Black woman to be hired and promoted in a San Francisco Bank of America branch. She instilled in her children a sense of selfhood by providing a cultural affinity and identity of being African, as she has been a student of African dance and culture, which she taught her children.

During the civil rights movement, I participated in NAACP youth organizing and was one of many who engaged in street riots against racism and police brutality in San Francisco. In my high school years, I became a leading member of the Black Student Union. Because of my ability to articulate the issues that confronted Black students, I often toured San Jose, in what was called "speakout," with the BSU Chairman of San Jose State and City College. I had become a member of the "House of Umoja," a cultural-nationalist affiliate of Ron Karenga's US organization.

At the age of 16-1/2, on April 6, 1968, the night Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated, the BSU Chairman of S.J. State and City College, myself and a couple of high school students were arrested in a car for possession of high-powered rifles and molotov cocktails. Black high school students picketed and demonstrated in front of San Jose City Hall demanding our release from detention. After the assassination of Rev. King, I began to believe a more militant response to national oppression and racism was necessary, and began to look towards the Black Panther Party for Self Defense for leadership. I remembered when the Panthers received national attention, when they marched on the California Capital bearing arms--watching it on TV news--I then told my mother I wanted to be one of them. Of course, she discouraged the notion, but the experience left an indelible impression of righteous Black men in rebellion against racism.

I became affiliated with the Black Panther Party when I was 18 years old. Having moved back to San Francisco from San Jose, I was recruited into the Black underground by old elementary school friends who had since become Panthers. Less than two months from my twentieth birthday, I was captured along with Albert Nuh Washington in a midnight shoot-out with San Francisco police. I was subsequently charged with a host of revolutionary underground activity, including the assassination of two NYC police officers for which I'm currently serving a life sentence. Having been imprisoned since 1971, Nuh and I are two of the four longest held Black political prisoners outside of South Africa. The two others are our co-defendant Herman Bell, imprisoned in 1973, and Elmer "Geronimo" Pratt, imprisoned in 1970.

Since my imprisonment, I have been held in four major maximum security prisons in California, and six different maximum security prisons in New York state. It was while in the infamous Adjustment Center in San Quentin, celled next door to the indomitable Ruchell Magee, that the idea was first generated to petition the United Nations on the existence of political prisoners in the United States. Hence, in 1976 I launched the National Prisoners Campaign to Petition the United Nations. Along with assistance from the Prisoners Union and the Prairie Fire Organizing Committee, we organized and directed a national campaign initiative. With Sundiata Acoli being the East Coast representative, and many BLA comrades in prison across the country supporting this endeavor, along with a thousand progressive prisoners signing petitions, we successfully had a petition submitted and discussed in Geneva, Switzerland. This effort created the conditions for Lennox Hinds and the National Conference of Black Lawyers to have the UN International Commission of Jurists tour U.S. prisons and speak with specific political prisoners. The International Commission of Jurists then reported to the UN Subcommittee on Discrimination and Treatment of Minorities, and other UN bodies, that political prisoners did in fact exist in the United States. I have since written a treatise on this matter entitled "National POW Amnesty Campaign," as well as other articles and booklets on the revolutionary activity in North America, including a booklet entitled "For the Liberation of North America" and a collaborative work called "Political Prisoners Revolutionary Solidarity Movement."

With the waning of the prisoner movement in this country, when I was paroled from California and began the New York state sentence, I began organizing in New York state prisons. Such organizing took on quasi-legal-political dimensions, pertaining to the needs of prisoners in New York state, filing law suits, and drafting legislation to change the laws prohibiting Good Time credit for lifers. One of my legislative petitions has been introduced to the New York State Legislative Assembly by Assemblyman Arthur Eve.

Presently, my co-defendants on the 1975 New York conviction, Herman Bell, Albert Nuh Washington, and I, known as the New York 3, are fighting for our release from prison. The case of the New York 3 is one of the most significant political prisoners case since the BPP leadership trials. In our case, progressive people will learn to what extent the government will act to imprison those persons they feel are a threat to continued practices of national oppression and racism.

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